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C O N F I D E N T I A L VATICAN 004211

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/WE LEVIN; NEA/RA; IO/UNP; IO/PHO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/15/2013

TAGS: [IZ](#) [PREL](#) [VT](#)

SUBJECT: IRAQ: VATICAN CONCERNED BY LACK OF NECESSITIES;
SUPPORTS U.S. DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS

REF: A. A) VATICAN 2578

[B](#). B) VATICAN 3185

[C](#). C) VATICAN 3847

Classified By: Ambassador Jim Nicholson for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

Summary

[1](#). (C) Holy See Deputy Foreign Minister Parolin told Embassy September 11 that the Papal Nuncio in Baghdad believed the continued lack of "basic necessities" amongst the general population was generating an increasingly hostile reaction towards coalition forces. Parolin welcomed U.S. efforts to broaden the international community's activity in Iraq, and noted the crucial role the Holy See feels moderate Arab countries could play in the reconstruction process. The Holy See is continuing its efforts to expand its dialogue with the Islamic world, engaging moderate Muslim groups that it hopes can counterbalance more radical influences. End summary.

Lack of Necessities Provoking Ire of Iraqis

[2](#). (C) DCM and EUR/WE Deputy Director Hernandez met September 11 with Holy See Deputy Foreign Minister Pietro Parolin and US Affairs Office Director Paolo Gualtieri as part of Hernandez's orientation trip to the Holy See. Asked what the Holy See was hearing from its Nuncio in Baghdad, Parolin said the Nuncio was increasingly concerned by the continuing lack of "basic necessities" in Iraq, which he believed was provoking a hostile reaction from Iraqis towards coalition forces. Shortages of water, electricity, some foodstuffs, and medical services, combined with a continuing sense of insecurity, were leading to bubbling discontent, which people then blamed on the American forces. DCM responded that the U.S. was working flat out to restore and in many cases improve basic services, but that sabotage and the poor state of the preexisting infrastructure had hindered this effort. Noting that the President had just requested an additional 87 billion dollars for Iraqi reconstruction, he emphasized that the U.S. was determined to address the problems, but needed the full support of the international community.

UNSCR / More International Cooperation the "Right Idea."

[3](#). (C) Turning to efforts in New York to secure a new UN Security Council Resolution and increased international participation in Iraq, Parolin said the U.S. had the "right idea." The Holy See would like to see broad international oversight and cooperation, but with Iraqis in the lead on reconstruction efforts as much as possible. Parolin said he understood the US wanted to maintain its leadership role in Iraq, but urged the US to continue efforts to "find unity" and further cooperation in the international community. DCM pointed out that the U.S. goal is to turn as much authority as possible to the Iraqi people as soon as possible, but that this had to be done in a way which would ensure stability and security in Iraq.

Engagement with the Islamic World

[4](#). (C) The Deputy Foreign Minister also stressed the importance of deepening the involvement of "moderate Arab countries" in Iraqi reconstruction and security efforts. The Holy See regards these countries as an indispensable resource in the effort to stabilize Iraq. For its part, the Vatican continues to look for any and every opportunity for dialogue with willing interlocutors from the Islamic world. Dialogue "is the only way," Parolin said. He explained that the Holy See was trying to work with moderate Islamic elements in the hopes that they might convince their more radical coreligionists to adopt a more moderate and peaceful interpretation of Islam. Parolin pointed out that the non-hierarchical structure of Islam made it difficult to find

interlocutors who were willing to talk and would have an impact on others. But he said the Vatican had had some success in such dialogue, pointing to efforts in Indonesia as an example.

COMMENT: Holy See Staying Engaged with Islam

15. (C) The Vatican has a keen interest in the well-being of Iraq's Christian (mostly Chaldean Catholic) population, which makes up approximately 2 percent of Iraq's population. Parolin reiterated the Vatican's fears that the establishment of a hard-line Islamic government in Iraq could lead to repression of Iraq's Christians (ref a, b). This particular interest, however, is only a part of the Vatican's broader interest in dialogue with the Arab world to overcome religious intolerance. For example, ref c noted the potential for Vatican engagement with Iran -- with whom it maintains an active diplomatic dialogue -- to temper its interference in Iraq. Likewise, the Vatican-sanctioned Catholic NGO Sant' Egidio is also continuing its efforts to promote Christian-Muslim dialogue (septel). In Iraq and elsewhere, we can continue to count on the Holy See as a useful ally in promoting moderation, tolerance, and understanding.

Nicholson

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